

## MISPLACED FAITH.

"But don't you think you are reposing too much confidence in him, Bertha?" said Mrs. Portman to her friend Bertha Baker. The pretty young widow laughed and shook her head.

When Gerald Montessor proposed to Bertha Baker, a wealthy young widow with two children, she burst into tears and murmured something about "not being good enough for him."

Miss Johnson, the governess of little Blanche and Bessie, clasped her hands in delight when Bertha told her of her engagement.

"He's such a darling man!" said Miss Johnson.

So the big wedding cake was made, and the white silk dress was ordered, and the clergyman engaged to perform the ceremony, when a telegram arrived from Europe demanding Mrs. Baker's instant presence at the deathbed of her only brother.

"You surely will not think of going, Bertha?" pleaded the bridegroom elect.

"I shall go," Mrs. Baker answered quietly. "It is a duty from which I may not shrink."

And she went, resolutely refusing the escort of Mr. Montessor, "because," she said, "I would rather know that my little ones are safe under your fatherly care."

Before she sailed, however, she made a will, leaving her children and property to her all, to the guardianship of Gerald Montessor, and thereby arose the remark which opens our tale.

Three or four weeks glided away before a second telegram was handed into the Gothic furnished library of the house on Patrician square where Mr. Montessor was reading the paper aloud to Miss Joseph Johnson:

Isail in the San Duomo April 21. Love to all. B. B.

And while the upholsterer's men were tacking down the pale blue velvet carpet in the bride's boudoir the sad tidings came of the foundering of the good steamer San Duomo and the loss of all on board. The little children stared in bewilderment at their black frocks and wide black sashes.

"The Lord's will be done," groaned Mr. Montessor.

"We must strive to be resigned," said Miss Joseph Johnson.

It was a sunbright morning toward the 1st of June. Mrs. Portman was watering the monthly roses and geraniums in her windows, when there came a soft tapping at the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Portman, and straightforward a ghost glided in.

Or at least so she thought. It was Bertha Baker, the woman whom they all believed to be shrined in coral at the bottom of the Atlantic.

"Don't be frightened, Mrs. Portman," said Bertha. "It's only I. I didn't sail in the Duomo after all. A little extra law business that I hadn't anticipated kept me until the next steamer. I was so vexed, but I'll never grumble again. It was the saving of my life. And now tell me about the children—about Gerald."

Mrs. Portman's spectacles glared upon the inquiring face of the young widow.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that you haven't been there?"

"I wanted to hear something of their welfare first. I wanted to surprise them."

"And I guess you will surprise them," said Mrs. Portman. "Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why," said Mrs. Portman, with a roguish twinkle in her eyes, "Mr. Montessor thought it was a great pity the wedding cake and the dress and the veil should all be wasted, so he is to marry that precious Miss Joseph Johnson of yours the day after tomorrow."

"Impossible!" gasped Bertha. "And the children?"

"Oh, the children! They are a secondary consideration," said Mrs. Portman dryly. "They are to be packed off to a boarding school, for Miss Joseph Johnson has had quite enough of them already, and Mr. Montessor isn't fond of children now that their mother's care is off him and the property is in his own control."

Mrs. Baker's lips were compressed. "The man is a false villain!" she cried.

"Just exactly what I've always thought myself," retorted Mrs. Portman, "but you wouldn't believe a word of it!"

"Let us go to them at once," cried Mrs. Baker, the fateful color coming and going in fever flashes on her cheek. "The idea of sending my children away to boarding school—my little pet lambs!"

Miss Joseph Johnson was trying on the wedding dress in Mrs. Baker's own bedroom when the doorbell rang.

"It'll do pretty well," said Miss Johnson, "although I should have preferred white satin with sprays of orange blossoms all around the hem of the veil, and—do get out of the way, Blanche and Bessie, you little bothering plagues, or I'll slap your faces!"

"No, you will not," said a soft, firm voice close beside her. "Take off that dress at once and then take yourself out of my house!"

Miss Joseph Johnson gave an eldritch scream of terror and dismay.

"I thought you were drowned!" she screamed.

"I am as alive as yourself," said Bertha calmly, and then, followed by Mrs. Portman, she walked down stairs into the drawing room, where Mr. Montessor was leisurely reading the paper.

"Is that you, my darling Joseph?" he asked without turning his head. "Come here and give your own Jerry a kiss."

Mrs. Baker bit her lip.

"You are under a mistake, Mr. Montessor," said she. "You and your darling Joseph may clear out as soon as you please."

"Bertha!" Mr. Montessor's classic jaw fell, his eyes expanded. "Bertha! Alive and well! Has Providence worked a miracle?"

"Exactly!" said Mrs. Baker. Providence has revealed to me the real character of those in whom I trusted so implicitly—something little short of a miracle!"

Mr. Montessor lost his rich wife, but Miss Joseph Johnson did not gain a husband. She is an old maid still, for "that dear man" had too much common sense to throw himself away on a homeless governess. And Bertha Baker still remains a widow, devoted to Blanche and Bessie.

—Exchange.

The Chinese government does all in its power to check the opium habit, the punishments common in the Chinese army for this habit being extreme. For the first offense a man may have his upper lip cut; for the second he may be decapitated.

In regard to longevity the clergy stand at the head of the professions and physicians near the bottom, below coal merchants, milkmen and grocers.

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Would Not Suffer So Again for Fifty Times Its Price. I awoke last night with severe pains in my stomach. I never felt so badly in my life. When I came down to work this morning I felt so weak I could hardly work. I went to Miller & McCurdy's drug store and they recommended Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy. It worked like magic and one dose fixed me all right. It certainly is the finest thing I ever used for stomach trouble. I shall not be without it in my home hereafter, for I should not care to endure the sufferings of last night again for fifty times its price.—G. H. Wilson, Liverman, Burgettstown, Washington Co., Pa. This remedy is for sale by all druggists.

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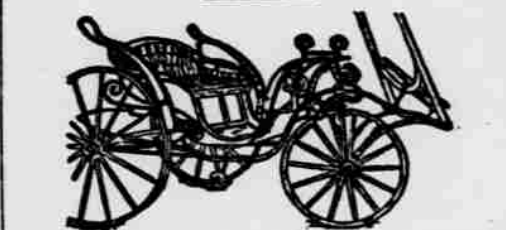
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